

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BANGUI 00163 291700Z

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ACTION AF-04

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGUI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6605

S E C R E T BANGUI 0163

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LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EINV, EMIN, CT

SUBJECT: GOCAR AUTHORITIES OCCUPY DDI/SCED OFFICES

1. RESIDENT AMCIT DIRECTOR FREDDY OELBAUM IN CHARGE OF DDI/SCED/CND OPERATIONS IN CAR HAS JUST INFORMED EMBASSY THAT FORCE OF SOME TWENTY MEMBERS OF CENTRAL AFRICAN GENDARMERIE LED BY A COLONEL OCCUPIED DDI/SCED HEADQUARTERS AT ABOUT 0600 TODAY. ASSISTED BY TWO STATE CONTROLLERS/INSPECTORS AND A RELUCTANT DIRECTOR GENERAL OF MINES, GENDARMERIE CONTINGENT HAS BEEN GOING THROUGH SCED'S LEDGERS, SAFES CABINETS AND FILES ALL MORNING ACCORDING OELBAUM.

2. UNTIL HIS RELEASE AT NOON TODAY, OELBAUM SAID THAT NONE OF HIS STAFF HAD BEEN ALLOWED TO LEAVE DDI/SCED COMPOUND IN CENTRAL BANGUI OR TO MAKE OR RECEIVE TELEPHONE CALLS. VISITORS TO DDI/SCED OFFICES WERE DETAINED IN COURSE OF MORNING INCLUDING HONORARY DUTCH CONSUL AND WIFE OF HONORARY SWISS CONSUL. OELBAUM AND STAFF ORDERED RETURN AT 1600 TO OFFICES FROM WHICH THEY CONTINUE REMAIN LOCKED OUT BY GENDARMERIE.

3. ACTION SEEMS DIRECTED SOLELY AGAINST DDI/SCED. CHARGE OBSERVED TEN OR SO GENDERMERIE OUTSIDE OF DDI/SCED BUILDING. IN TOUR OF OTHER DIAMOND BUYING OFFICES HOWEVER FOUND NO POLICE OR MILITARY. ALL SEEMED TO BE DOING BUSINESS AS USUAL. EXCEPTION WAS ISRAELI-

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PAGE 02 BANGUI 00163 291700Z

RUN SOPICAD WHICH OCCUPIED TEMPORARILY BY FLUKE MOST LIKELY AS THEY

JUST HAPPEN TO HAVE MISFORTUNE TO OCCUPY OFFICES IN DDI/SCED BUILDING.

4. OELBAUM BELIEVES PURPOSE OF GOCAR OPERATION IS TO FIND IRREGULARITIES OR ARGUMENTS WHICH WILL PROVIDE GOCAR PRETEXT SUCH AS TRAFFICKING FOR SEIZING SCED ASSETS AND POSSIBLY THOSE OF DDI AND OF CND, THE CUTTING FACTORY.

5. IMMEDIATE REASON FOR THIS SUDDEN ACTION MAY HAVE BEEN SERIES OF STEPS DDI/SCED HAS TAKEN IN PAST WEEK TO BEGIN CLOSING DOWN OPERATIONS IN DAMAGE CONTROL EFFORT TO REDUCE LOSSES IN CASE OF EVENTUAL SEIZURE OF SCED ASSETS. THESE INCLUDE NOTIFICATION TO CAR EMPLOYMENT DIRECTOR ON JANUARY 27 THAT IT WOULD BE NECESSARY TO RELEASE APPROXIMATELY FIFTY PERCENT OF SCED'S SOME TEN THOUSAND ARTISAN EMPLOYEES AND LETTER OF NOTIFICATION TO GOCAR ON JANUARY 24 THAT SCED WISHED RELINQUISH ITS CONCESSIONARY RIGHTS IN DIAMOND AREAS.

6. AS FOR OUTLOOK OELBAUM EXPECTS THAT OFFICES WILL REMAIN SEALED REST OF WEEK AND THAT IT ONLY QUESTION OF TIME UNTIL SCED AND POSSIBLY DDI ASSETS SEIZED. PRESIDENT BOKASSA MEANWHILE IS REPORTEDLY IN ZAIRE AND IS EXPECTED TO RETURN IN NEXT DAY OR TWO. DDI/SCED OFFICIALS OF COURSE DO NOT DOUBT THAT OCCUPATION THEIR OFFICES TOOK PLACE UNDER HIS INSTRUCTIONS.

7. OELBAUM AND CHARGE REMAINING IN CLOSE TOUCH THROUGHOUT DAY AND SITREP WILL BE SENT SEPTTEL.

8. GIVEN POSSIBLE DIFFICULTIES HE MAY CONFRONT REACHING DDI PRESIDENT ALBERT JOLIS IN NEW YORK, OELBAUM ASKS THAT DEPARTMENT INFORM JOLIS OF SITUATION AT PLAZA 9-8383.

9. WHILE AWAITING RETURN OF BOKASSA AND ANY FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS WHICH MIGHT SHED SOME LIGHT ON GOCAR'S MOTIVATION AND INTENTIONS IN REGARD TO DDI/SCED, EMBASSY AND OELBAUM CAREFULLY WEIGHING TOGETHER HOW AND EXTENT TO WHICH BOTH PRIVATE AND OFFICIAL DISPLEASURE SHOULD BE SHOWN TO GOCAR OVER THIS DEMEANING VIOLATION OF THE TERMS OF THE GOCAR/SCED AGREEMENT. WOULD WELCOME DEPARTMENT'S INPUT US TO THESE QUESTIONS AND AS TO TIMING.

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PAGE 03 BANGUI 00163 291700Z

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